

**TESTIMONY before the Appropriations Committee**  
**On the Governor's Biennial Budget**  
**March 6, 2015**  
**Nancy Schiavone, Secretary, Catchment Area Council 9**  
**Member, Rushford's Friendship Social Club, Meriden, CT**

Good afternoon Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Nancy Schiavone and I am a registered voter in the city of Meriden. I am here to testify on the Governor's Proposed Biennial Budget, particularly against the cut to the budgets of the Regional Mental Health Boards, which would effectively eliminate these critical Boards and their local citizen-based Catchment Area Councils.

I am the secretary of Catchment Area Council 9 which is part of the Region II Regional Mental Health Board that covers Meriden and Wallingford. Our members are quite distressed that their important and effective work will be eliminated.

As you know, the Boards and CACs were established by the legislature 40 years ago to provide citizen-based, independent oversight of CT's mental health system and services. To that end members of CAC 9 and their elected representatives to the Board help us to speak for those who cannot always speak for themselves. The Board helps us to glean important information and perspective to enable our members to fulfill our legislatively mandated duties. We have successfully advocated over the years for essential services to improve our mental health system by conducting reviews and evaluations of service providers that receive public funds.

Our CAC members work with the Board to develop priorities and to develop advocacy skills and strategies that we teach to members of our social club and with education and outreach to the general public.

**Please allow us to continue our valuable service to the citizens of CT.**